

Mr Chairman,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Thank you so much for this opportunity once again to share my views on HB 4493

Two days ago, on April 24<sup>th</sup> Armenians in Turkey and around the world remembered the tragedy and the sufferings of many Ottoman Armenians in 1915.

The President of my country commemorated Ottoman Armenians and on behalf of our nation, extended condolences to their loved ones.

Our President also reiterated that we share this common pain and expressed gratitude to all Armenian citizens who have contributed to our country from past to present.

I take this occasion to express my heartfelt condolences to the Armenian community members in Michigan for their losses.

As I mentioned last week in this room, we recognize that the Armenians suffered a tragedy in the final years of the Ottoman Empire. That is a historical fact.

But the allegations that it was a “systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder” are not.

The historical fact that the Ottoman Armenians suffered high mortality does not need to be supported with fraudulent Hitler quotes, prejudiced Morgenthau stories, over exaggerated numbers on killed Armenians, fabricated Andonian telegrams or Hollywood recreations.

Each needless death is indeed a tragedy.

However, when it comes to the crime genocide what matters is not the numbers but the intent.

No one has ever found evidence of any Ottoman intent to kill all the Armenians.

All evidence indicates that there could never have been such an intent.

None of the Ottoman orders commanding the relocation of Armenians, which have been reviewed by historians to date, order killings. To the contrary, they order Ottoman officials to protect relocated Armenians.

That is why Ottoman Government tried some 1500 military and public officials, punished, jailed and even executed many of them for their involvements in the killings of the Ottoman Armenians.

I have never heard of any Nazi official was tried and executed by Nazis for what they did to Jews.

Mr Chairman I am fully aware that this is not a History Committee. This is Education Committee and I do not wish to further complicate your work.

Let me put it very simply.

There are three definitions in this Bill.

The definition of Genocide is clearly taken from the 1948 UN Genocide Convention. US has ratified that Convention. Therefore there is no doubt about the legal basis of that definition.

Then we have the Holocaust definition. Adjudged by the Nuremberg Tribunal, the Holocaust definition in this bill has a sound legal justification as well.

When it comes to the "Armenian genocide" definition in this Bill, however, I do not know where it comes from and why it has the same wording as the Holocaust.

As I am certain that there is no court decision or international document ratified by the US contain such a definition, I am afraid this definition's legal basis and credibility is highly contentious.

Also I do know that members of the Jewish community don't want to see "Armenian genocide allegations to be equated with the Holocaust.

Last week, Senator Boohar asked a very relevant and pertinent question. "Where can we get credible and unbiased information on this issue"?

And a gentleman from the Armenian community answered that question by saying that "all documents were destroyed by the Ottoman Government."

Senator that is not true. No documents were destroyed but all of them were carefully archived. And our archives are open to historians and experts.

There is no independent body that has ever described the 1915 events as genocide.

There are historians, scholars, experts, community members who claim that it was a genocide.

And there are equal number of historians, scholars, experts, community members who are saying it was not a genocide.

There are grandmothers and grandfathers sharing their individual stories on the atrocities that they had suffered from. And I do respect.

Then there are other grandmothers and grandfathers telling their stories on and sufferings from, this time, the atrocities caused by the Ottoman Armenians.

This is exactly why back in 2005, the Turkish Government extended an invitation to the Armenian Government to establish a joint group consisting of historians and other experts to study the events of 1915 not only in the archives of Turkey and Armenia but also in the archives of all relevant third countries and to share their findings with the international public.

We believe that such an initiative would shed light on a disputed period of history and also constitute a step towards contributing to the normalization of relations between two countries.

Mr Chairman,

Senators,

Yesterday I read a commentary on Detroit News by Mr Ronald Grigor Suny, Professor at the University of Michigan.

Professor Suny said, among others, in his commentary that “History must not be manipulated for political purposes”.

I fully agree with him.

History must be left to historians.

Parliaments, Senates, Houses, politicians, diplomats, and community leaders should not attempt to create genocides.

Genocide is a legal term, clearly defined in international law and therefore only a competent court can decide on whether an event is amounting to a genocide or not.

Today, is there any legal or pedagogical obstacle that prevent Michigan teachers from teaching the Holocaust or genocide?

Last week we heard from some teachers about why they are teaching genocide at their classes.

So there is already the Holocaust and genocide teaching going on.

So what is this Bill all about?

This Bill is all about subjecting children at Michigan schools to one-sided, prejudiced and biased narrative of a controversial historical event, with complete disregard to other narratives, comments and views.

If passed, this Bill will make it mandatory to Michigan teachers to tell students that 1.5 million Armenians were killed by Ottomans, but at the same time deprive them of telling students that 2.5 million Muslims and Jews were killed too.

With this Bill Teachers will teach students about Hitler’s reference to Armenian genocide but will not tell them that there is no single evidence that shows Hitler has ever said something like that.

Teachers will talk about Ambassador Morgenthau's stories but will not talk about US Ambassador Mark Bristol's words "The circulation of such false reports in the US, without refutation, is an outrage and is certainly doing the Armenians more harm than good..Why not tell the truth about the Armenians in every way?"

Teachers will put my people on equal footing with Nazis.

Teachers will teach students that Turks committed genocide against Armenians but hide from them that no court has ever made such a ruling.

Yesterday, I attended the ANZAC Day Commemoration in Chicago

As the representatives of nations that had engaged in a bloody and fierce war 101 years ago, we the Consul Generals of Turkey, Australia, New Zealand and the UK stood shoulder to shoulder and remembered our shared history together.

History is to take lessons and to pass those lessons on to future generations so that they can live in peace, harmony and friendship.

What I did with my Australian, New Zealand and UK colleagues yesterday is just an example of that.

If history cannot help us do that then it is not history but it is propaganda.

We can remember our shared pain together with our Armenian brothers and sisters.

But not with this bill that insults my nation and portrays my people same as Nazis.

With this in mind, I once again respectfully ask that you not support HB 4493 as it is currently worded.

Thank you all very much for listening.

**Umut Acar**

**Consul General of Turkey in Chicago**

**Senate Education Committee Hearing on HB4493**

**26 April 2016, Lansing, Michigan**